

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 0306

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES QUESTIONS IN JAN 30 REFERENDUM

REF: MANILA 0028

BEGIN SUMMARY: ON JAN 7, PRESIDENT MARCOS PROMULGATED DECREE SPECIFYING QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IN JAN 30 REFERENDUM. THEY CONCERN: (A) MARTIAL LAW, (B) INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND (C) TENURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. PRESIDENT HAS ORDERED MASSIVE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN TO FAMILIARIZE ELECTORATE WITH QUESTIONS PRIOR TO REFERENDUM. GOVERNMENT STILL MUST INDICATE LINE IT HOPES VOTERS WILL HEW TO IN REFERENDUM BUT WE WOULD ANTICIPATE OVERWHELMING ENDORSEMENT OF MARCOS' MARTIAL LAW PERFORMANCE AND NEED FOR ITS CONTINUATION. EXACTLY WHAT GOVERNMENT WANTS IN TERMS OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS LESS CERTAIN (EXCEPT FOR DECISION ON MANILA) BUT SHOULD BE MADE CLEARER OVER NEXT FEW WEEKS. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JAN 7, PRESIDENT MARCOS PROMULGATED PRESIDENTIAL DECREE #637 WHICH SPECIFIES QUESTIONS TO BE POSED TO VOTERS IN JAN 30 REFERENDUM. THERE ARE TWO SETS OF QUESTIONS: ONE FOR METRO MANILA AND OTHER FOR REST OF COUNTRY, ALTHOUGH ONLY DIFFERENCE IN QUESTIONS PERTAINS
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TO LOCAL OFFICIALS. VOTERS IN METRO MANILA ARE ASKED

TO APPROVE PROPOSAL BY WHICH METRO MANILA GOVERNMENT WOULD BE INTEGRATED UNDER MANAGER-COMMISSION APPOINTED BY PRESIDENT AND CURRENT LOCAL OFFICIALS WOULD LOSE ALL POWER. REST OF COUNTRY IS ASKED WHETHER IT WANTS ITS LOCAL ELECTIVE OFFICIALS, WHOSE TERMS EXPIRE IN DECEMBER, APPOINTED BY PRESIDENT OR ELECTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH CONSTITUTION.

2. SECOND QUESTION IS WHETHER PEOPLE APPROVE OF MANNER PRESIDENT HAS EXERCISED HIS MARTIAL LAW POWERS AND WHETHER HE SHOULD CONTINUE TO EXERCISE THESE POWERS. IT CONCLUDES THAT "THERE ARE SUGGESTIONS THAT MARTIAL LAW BE LIFTED. DO YOU WANT MARTIAL LAW TO CONTINUE?" THIRD QUESTION, ON LEGISLATIVE BODY, NOTES THAT IN JAN 1973 REFERENDUM PEOPLE DECIDED THERE SHOULD NOT BE ELECTIONS AND INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (INA) SHOULD NOT BE CONVENED. REFERENDUM QUESTION ASKS: "DO YOU WANT THE PRESIDENT TO CONVENE THE INA IMMEDIATELY?"

3. PRESIDENT MARCOS, WHO SIGNED DECREE #637 IN WIDELY-PUBLICIZED CEREMONY AT MALACANANG JAN 7, HAS DIRECTED TRANSLATION OF REFERENDUM QUESTIONS INTO ALL DIALECTS SPOKEN BY AT LEAST 50,000 PERSONS AND WIDEST POSSIBLE DISSEMINATION OF QUESTIONS AND THEIR DISPLAY IN POSTER FORM. PRESIDENT ALSO EXPRESSED SATISFACTION QUESTIONS HAD BEEN FORMULATED BY COMELEC AFTER EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH PEOPLE ON NATION-WIDE SCALE. FYI: MILITARY CAN PARTICIPATE IN 1975 REFERENDUM UNLIKE PREVIOUS REFERENDUM EXERCISES. END FYI.

4. COMMENT: QUESTIONS ARE VERY CAREFULLY AND, WE THINK, CLEVERLY WORDED. THEY WILL ASSIST GOVERNMENT IN GIVING IMPRESSION OF CONSULTING WITH THE PEOPLE, AND THEY MAY IN FACT ENABLE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE CLOSELY CONTROLLED SOUNDING OF PEOPLE'S MOOD WITHOUT INTERFERING WITH OVERALL GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF REFERENDUM AND REFERENDUM RESULTS. PRELIMINARY READING OF WHAT QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO MEAN SUGGESTS FOLLOWING: (A) METRO MANILA WILL BE INTEGRATED IN SINGLE ENTITY GOVERNED BY APPOINTED CITY MANAGER. (B) OTHER LOCALITIES MAY, DEPENDING ON RESPONSE, BE GIVEN

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OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE SOME KIND OF LOCAL ELECTIONS AT LATER DATE. (C) THE PRESIDENT CONDUCT WILL BE APPROVED AS WILL CONTINUATION OF MARTIAL LAW. (D) INA QUESTION WILL ENABLE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE SOUNDING OF PEOPLE'S MOOD, BUT USE OF WORD "IMMEDIATELY" SUGGESTS GOVERNMENT WILL LOOK FOR NEGATIVE COMMENT. ASSUMING RESPONSE TO LOCAL ELECTION PROPOSITION WERE POSITIVE, HOWEVER, PRESIDENT COULD AT SOME TIME STATE THAT LOCAL ELECTIONS WERE TO

BE HELD AS FIRST STEP TO CONVOKING--ULTIMATELY--THE INA,
SHOULD HE DECIDE THERE WAS SUFFICIENT INTEREST IN IT AND
ADVANTAGE FOR HIM. WE WILL COMMENT MORE EXTENSIVELY ON
QUESTIONS AND PREPARATIONS FOR JAN 30 REFERENDUM IN
SUBSEQUENT AIRGRAM.
SULLIVAN

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